

## Message Text

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P R 112348Z AUG 78  
FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
TO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE PRIORITY  
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA  
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR  
AMEMBASSY MANILA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 204256

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SN

SUBJECT:SINGAPORE DEL REACTIONS TO US-ASEAN DIALOGUE

1. SINGAPORE (ALONG WITH THE PHILIPPINES) HAS MOST REASON TO BE CONTENT WITH US-ASEAN MINISTERIAL, BUT AT SOME TEMPORARY COST TO ITS RELATIONS WITH FELLOW ASEAN DELS. SINGAPORE'S PRIMARY GOAL WAS TO PROMOTE A LONG-RANGE POLITICAL CONTEXT FOR THE TALKS. FONMIN RAJARATNAM HAD ESSENTIALLY ACHIEVED HIS PURPOSE BY 2:00 P.M. OF THE FIRST DAY FOLLOWING A "SUPPLEMENTARY" OPENING STATEMENT, THE LEADING ROLE IN THE POLITICAL EXCHANGE, MEETINGS WITH HOUSE AND SENATE LEADERS, AND A WELL ATTENDED NATIONAL PRESS CLUB SPEECH. THE JOB DONE, AND FOLLOWING ADVICE OF HIS STAFF, HE REVERTED TO A MODEST PROFILE. THE DEMOCRACY VS. COMMUNISM  
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NISM, FREE ENTERPRISE VS STATISM, AND "OUR SIDE -- THEIR SIDE" THEMES DISCOMFITED HIS ASEAN COLLEAGES (EXCEPT ROMULO) WHO TRIED TO TONE DOWN HIS COMMENTS AND ALERT THEIR CAPITALS TO WHAT HE HAD ALREADY SAID. RAJARATNAM REGARDED THEIR REACTIONS WITH PUCKISH AMUSEMENT. OVERALL, WE BELIEVE HE FOUND OUR EMPHASIS ON A LONG-TERM US-ASEAN RELATIONSHIP REASSURING.

2. GOS AMB TOOK INITIATIVE HOST DINNER FOR GOS DEL AND EA PRINCIPALS PLUS SEVERAL OTHERS ON AUG 1. IT PROVIDED EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS TACTICS AND GOALS WHICH PROVED VALUABLE. HE WAS VERY HELPFUL, FOR EXAMPLE, IN KEEPING THE DIALOGUE FLOWING IN THE PLENARY AND ON THE HILL AS SOME OF THE ASEAN DELS WERE RETICENT IN BEING THE FIRST TO SPEAK. HE ALSO PLAYED THE KEY BEHIND-THE-SCENES ROLE WITH FONMIN ROMULO IN PREVENTING THE LATTER FROM DETRACTING FROM THE REFUGEE DISCUSSION BY A SYMBOLIC PROTEST OVER OUR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES. IN THE END, ROMULO SIMPLY DID NOT RETURN FROM THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB IN TIME TO PARTICIPATE.

3. GOS SENIOR MINISTER GOH AND HIS ACCOMPANYING EXPERTS WERE WELL-INFORMED ON THE ECONOMIC ISSUES AND PROBED PRIVATELY AND INTENSIVELY ON THE PROSPECTS FOR MTN AND MOVEMENT ON THE COMMON FUND. THEY WERE ALSO GUARDEDLY ENTHUSIASTIC ON THE PENDING VISITS BY EXIM AND OPIC AND NOTED THAT THEY HOPED BOTH SECTIONS OF THE OPIC MISSION WOULD VISIT SINGAPORE.

4. FOLLOW-UP: MAINTAINING A MOMENTUM IN US-ASEAN RELATIONS WILL REQUIRE THE ON-GOING PRIORITY ATTENTION OF THE DEPT AND POSTS (INCLUDING THE AMBASSADOR). OUR INTEREST AND EFFORTS CANNOT SUCCEED, OF COURSE, UNLESS THERE IS

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COMPARABLE ATTENTION BY RESPONSIBLE LEVELS OF ASEAN. IT WOULD BE A MISFORTUNE FOR EXAMPLE, TO AGAIN BE FACED WITH THE ASEAN DELAY WHICH PREVENTED THE WORKING GROUP ON DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FROM MEETING UNTIL TEN MONTHS AFTER THE 1977 MANILA MEETING.

5. IN THE CASE OF SINGAPORE, WE HOPE THAT GOS IS SATISFIED THAT THIS MEETING HAS ESTABLISHED US INTEREST IN ON-GOING FRAMEWORK FOR US-ASEAN RELATIONS. AS THE NATION WHICH PROBABLY VALUES THE POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP THE MOST, WE ACCORDINGLY HOPE THE GOS WILL WORK ON THE OTHER ASEAN STATES TO SUPPORT THE MOMENTUM, EVEN IN THOSE AREAS WHERE SINGAPORE HAS LESS DIRECT INTEREST -- SUCH AS DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION. IN AN EFFORT TO BUILD UPON RAJARATNAM'S COOPERATIVE EFFORTS, THE SECRETARY WILL SHORTLY BE SENDING HIM A WARM LETTER OF APPRECIATION. CHRISTOPHER

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